

Service members save lives; employ first aid to vehicle accident victims

Story and photo by Cpl. G. Lane Miley

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti – A sailor supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa was recognized Feb. 11 for providing life-saving medical care to a Djiboutian man and his family.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Anthony L. Fuller was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for his efforts saving the life of a Djiboutian man who, along with his family, was involved in a vehicle accident Jan. 31.

When returning from a leisure trip to Arta Plage, Fuller, who is the senior corpsman for Task Force Betio, and a group of fellow task force Marines no-

ticed a vehicle that appeared to have overturned with four victims on the ground near the wreck.

"When we came on there, everybody was pretty much on the deck. They definitely rolled it, looking at the roof. It looked like somebody probably pushed [the truck] back upright," said Fuller who served as an emergency medical technician for the past six years.

Fuller knew he could help and did his part as a first responder. According to his citation, working in an austere environment with extremely limited resources, he recognized the severity of the injuries and potential loss of life. He continued critical treatment and life-saving measures until host nation emergency personnel arrived.

"I was more concerned with dealing with the father," said Fuller of the driver, who appeared to be injured the worst. "The dad was open from the top of his head to right between his eyebrows, had skull fractures and was split open across his nose with cartilage hanging out."

Fuller assessed the victims' conditions and began attending to the man. He was not alone in his attempts to comfort and save the lives of the victims. Lance Cpls. James M. McCoy-Flowers and David E. Farfan cared for the mother and her two children, who were thrown from the bed of the truck. The children suffered only a few bruises and abrasions when they were ejected, but seemed to be in shock from the incident, the Marines said.

"Doc took his pulse, and his pulse was dropping rapidly because he was just hemorrhaging really bad," said Farfan of the driver. "The doc administered an [intravenous injection] and we just helped him out – passing out gauzes to the lady and the kids and seeing what else we could help with."

In basic training each Marine learns basic lifesaving steps – to start the breathing, stop the bleeding, protect the wound and treat for shock – the Marines on hand used those skills.

"That's what these guys did, relying on their Marine Corps first aid," said Fuller of McCoy-Flowers and Farfan. "It's basic stuff – treat for shock – [we] noticed how his

blood pressure was dropping. We dumped that IV, dumped two bags in him [and] once we had his legs up, all of a sudden his blood pressure went stable again – basic Marine Corps first aid. This is the stuff corpsmen preach to Marines all the time. Obviously some of it stuck."

McCoy-Flowers, noncommissioned officer in charge of training/company clerk, and Farfan, armory custodian, also ensured Fuller had room enough to work on his patient and handed him gauze and other supplies from his medical bag. Fuller said this was the first time he has responded to an accident and had a limited amount of supplies, unlike his days as an EMT.

Another first responder was Marine Sgt. Daniel R. Williams, who along with Farfan, quickly provided Fuller with needed gear while the corpsman attended to the father's head injuries and McCoy-Flowers gave the mother water.

"If it wasn't for [Fuller], he wouldn't have made it," Williams said of the corpsman's quick actions.

Fuller said when he and the Marines arrived the driver was in bad shape, but he did what he could and had some good assistants.

"I was trying to hold the dad's head together, get a bandage on it and get an ace wrap over the top of it. My hands were kind of full, [they] were pretty much Johnny-on-the-spot with anything I'd need," said Fuller.

Fuller, a Fayetteville, N.C., native said he made sure the Marines used gloves when helping the victims, but they did not hesitate getting in there and helping the injured.

"I just couldn't stand seeing someone lying there immobile. I had to do something about it," said Farfan, a McMinnville, Ore., native.

The task force personnel cared for the accident victims until the Djiboutian medical team arrived.

"We were just waiting on someone to come pick them up," said McCoy-Flowers, a New York native. "Because it was either someone from base was going to come or we were going to drive them to the French hospital. We had already started clearing out the back of our vehicles."

It was about that time the Djiboutian ambulance pulled up from Djibouti City and took the victims to a nearby clinic, Fuller said.

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Capt. Charles R. Cassidy presents Petty Officer 3rd Class Anthony L. Fuller with a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal here Feb. 11. The Fayetteville, N.C., native was recognized for providing life-saving medical care to a Djiboutian man, who along with his family was involved in a serious vehicle accident Jan. 31.

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Cover photo by Cpl. G. Lane Miley

Petty Officer 3rd Class Anthony L. Fuller stands proudly with a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal he received for saving a Djiboutian man's life recently. See story above.

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